The Pagan Library

A Circle Purification That Doesn't Use Incense

For Asthmatics, Those With Allergies, And Those With Other Pulmonary Disorders

Matrika

This ritual was inspired when someone in our circle back in Central Massachusetts started dating a young woman who was a great herbalist, knowledgeable about crystal healing, a competent tarot-reader and a beginning astrologer. She had read "Spiral Dance" by Starhawk on the Craft of the Wise (Wicca) and wore a pentagram around her neck, but couldn't try circle work because she was allergic to smoke and had a serious asthma problem.

So, here's the rite. You prepare your altar as usual, with the exception of the incense and incense burner. 5 non-electric potpourri burners filled with water and an appropriately scented potpourri should be on or near the altar with 5 candles. Be sure that you use the correct type of candles for your potpourri burners, as other types can destroy the burners. Put these on the altar, which should be at the center of the circle and facing North or East according to your custom. If they do not fit without obstructing the work, place them in a semi-circle at the foot of the altar. Have matches there to light the candles under them at the proper time.

The Rite

(Leader 1 should be a male, if possible. Leader 2 should be a female, if possible.)

Leader 1 - blessing the water and herbal mixture in each potpourri burner with the wand. a long-stem rose with the thorns removed can be used for a wand if you do not yet have one. Of course, this must be replaced each time you do a ritual -

"By Fire and By Air
By Water and by Earth
by the Lady and the Lord
I conjure thee to purify our circle this night"

all- " So mote it be"

He takes one of the burners and the matches to the North where he lights it. Leader 2 accompanies him with her wand, after he lights it she raises her wand and says

Leader 2 - "By fire and air
By water and by earth
Let us purify the
Northern Quarter of our circle"

There is a pause during which everyone visualizes (vividly imagining in every detail from a relaxed, meditative state) an arc of rainbow light forming that quarter of the circle then, when she lowers the wand, everyone responds.

all - "So Mote It Be"

Leader 1 returns to the central altar and gets the next burner, placing it in the East and lighting it. Leader 2 continues in the same way as above. This procedure is then repeated in the South and then in the West. Each time the invocation is changed to reflect the direction they are in. Each time the group visualizes the rainbow arc of light. And after each direction, Leader 1 returns to the center to get the burner for the next direction ready. By constantly returning to the center each time, the emphasis is placed there. After the Western quarter is lit, Leader 1 places the final burner on the altar, between the candles, where the incense burner would be if there was one and lights it. Leader 2 stands before the altar, raises her wand and says

Leader 2 - "By Fire and by air
By water and by earth
Let us purify the sacred center of our circle
where Heaven and Earth Unite
and
Where the Lord and Lady are joined in love."

While her wand is raised, everyone visualizes the rainbow light from the outer circles flooding in to the center and filling the circle with harmonious vibrations and energies. After a few moments, she lowers her wand and everyone responds.

all- "SO mote it be"

The circle casting is continued as usual with the invocations of the elements at the 4 corners, according to your tradition. Then the actual circle-casting is done as usual. After this do whatever rite and/or magick you would usually do and close in the usual manner. Be sure to snuff the candles and not to blow them out. Use a silver teaspoon to do this, if you don't have a snuffer. This ceremony ONLY replaces the part of the rite where you sprinkle with salt-water and then cense the circle to purify it in PREPARATION for the actual circle casting. It is NOT the full casting of the circle. (Some traditions purify with all 4 elements separately, sprinkling salt on the floor for earth, water on the floor for itself, censing the circle for air, and carrying a candle around for fire. Either way this rite replaces the elemental purification, as the burners embody all 4 elements - the water for itself, the candle for fire, the herbs for earth, and the scent the steam gives off for air.)

OF course the potpourri burners used for this should only be used in your psychic work and should have been consecrated or smudged (by someone who can deal with the smoke) in preparation for this ritual.

To prepare appropriate potpourri scents for the purpose of your rites, use the directions for making the various home-made herbal incenses traditional in Witchcraft and in Magick; however, don't grind them with a mortar and pestle as you would in making incense. If you do not know the recipes for these, any of the Scott Cuningham books on making incenses would provide them for you. They are available from Llewelyn Publishing, box 64383 St. Paul Minnesota. (They will send you a free catalogue on request)

Despite the initial cost involved in obtaining the 5 burners, it is highly suggested you do it that way for two reasons"

1. In anything but a very small and enclosed space, you will not get enough scent to represent the air element sufficiently for magickal and ritual working. and
2. To represent all 4 elements in EACH of the quarters and in the center of the circle is very important in establishing the traditional boundaries between the worlds (the ordinary and non-ordinary or shamanic realities) that is the purpose of casting the circle and creating sacred space.

Also if you try to carry a potpourri burner that is lit and hot enough to be giving off the scented steam around the perimeter of the circle, you will certainly burn your fingers badly. (it is not appropriate to bring a pot holder into circle to carry it either! Please!)

I hope this is helpful to those who have breathing problems and wish to perform magick.

(submitted to Harvest newsletter, under JUKNO)

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